



Blackwork Journey Blog

January 2026



Make a
difference!





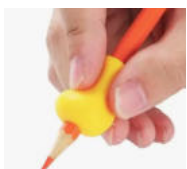
*To all members of the Blackwork Journey family
I wish you a happy, peaceful and creative New Year.*

Making life easier!

The start of another year brings new ideas for future projects, but as we get older new challenges sometimes emerge which require a different approach to our work. Over the years I have worked with many people who have challenging health issues such as eyesight problems or physical limitations and so when I design a new project, I am mindful of the difficulties that may be encountered. Sometimes the solution is simple, for example, better lighting, glasses, magnifying aids or using the right type of frame. Given these types of problems I have listed below some ideas that might be of assistance, and you might not have considered. Using the correct equipment can often make the difference to your crafting!

Often it is trial and error to find what you can or cannot do and can be a real source of frustration. Craft equipment for people with physical problems often tends to focus on improving grip, stability and ease of use by using specially designed tools to make activities like stitching, cutting, drawing and painting more accessible and enjoyable. Adapting standard tools with simple aids like non-slip mats or using technology like i-pads and smart phones can also significantly enhance your working environment. The following are just a few of the many examples;

1. Gripping & Holding aids



Pencil/Tool grippers: Rings or holders that fit over pens, pencils and brushes for better control. These allow you to trace a line or do your own drawings onto fabric. Use a cork board to pin the pattern and fabric down before drawing. This will hold it firmly into place and stop the fabric slipping.



Foam tubing: Slides over tools such as pencils and paintbrushes to create a larger, softer, easier-to-hold grip.

2. Cutting & Manipulating aids. There are many different types of scissors on the market but for limited hand mobility consider using spring-loaded, loop-handled, or one-handed scissors (like Easi-Grip) that require less hand strength to operate.



Fiskars soft grip thread cutting snips: Snips are used for trimming threads, notches, corners etc. They are easy to pick up, are spring-loaded, and the fingers go around the non-slip rubberised handle rather than in holes, making them simple to use. They're also sharp and precise. Fiskars also make a range of soft handled scissors.

One-Finger cutting tool: Small, specialised cutters for fine tasks. It looks like a rubber thimble and features a very small zirconia ceramic blade that easily cuts through plastic and paper. It allows you to quickly and safely open packaging with just the swipe of your finger and it can't cause serious injury like scissors or knives. Simply place the item to be cut on a cutting surface then place the Nimble on your finger and slide it across the surface of the item.



Prym magnetic pin holder with easy grip pins: The large heads on these pins make them easy to grip. This helps with poor grip or numbness in the hands. Arrange the pins round the edge of the magnetic dish to make them easier to pick up.

Pin pick up tool: Use a telescopic magnetic pick-up tool. Every workroom should have one!



Clover desktop needle threader: To thread a hand sewing needle insert the needle in the hole, lay the thread over the tool, push down on the lever and it threads the eye of the needle instantly. This is especially useful for people with vision difficulties, dexterity or grip issues.



3. Stability and Positioning aids:

Non-Slip mats: These keep materials from sliding around work surfaces. They are usually sold in rolls and can be cut to the required size.

Knee trays: Working in a chair, bed or wheelchair can be difficult. A simple knee tray with deep pockets keeps everything together. More sophisticated ones can be used for a home office.





Book rests: Angle-adjustable stands (free-standing or clamp-on) for holding patterns and books. I use mine to hold my i-pad when I am working from a pattern. You can zoom in on the chart to follow the pattern easily.

Embroidery frames:



Working a frame or hoop can be difficult if there are screws to tighten. However, there are a number different frames that can be used.

R & R Universal Craft Frames are easy to use and are suitable for cross-stitch, embroidery, quilting, needlepoint and silk-painting. They are available in a variety of sizes.

The semi-circular plastic clips are pushed onto the bars and then turned to tension the fabric. Smaller frames are easier to use than larger ones as you have more control over the hand movements and less strain on the hands.



Flexi frames: These plastic frames come in a variety of sizes and have no screws to turn and tension the fabric 'drum' tight. They can also be used to mount a finished embroidery.

By removing the frame at the end of each session avoids the embroidery being crushed or marked.



Hardwood lap tapestry/embroidery frames:

Keeping both hands free is difficult when working in a chair or wheelchair, but the base of these frames can be tucked underneath you and allow both hands to be free to work above and below the work as they can be turned easily unlike the tabletop frame which is less flexible.

Sit on frame



Table frame

Weighted items:



Weighted embroidery frames allow items to be pinned into them or more simply, a fabric covered house brick placed against your arm can help with tremors and provide stability. A homemade sandbag to hold a flat frame in place also works well.

Many of these tools and ideas are not expensive but they can make a world of difference!

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If you have any other tools or suggestions that you find useful when you are stitching, please e-mail me with the details. They could be very helpful to other readers to discover new tools and ideas.

Netty's Christmas ornament made over two old CDs.

Lights, lenses and magnifying aids will be explored next month in Part 2.

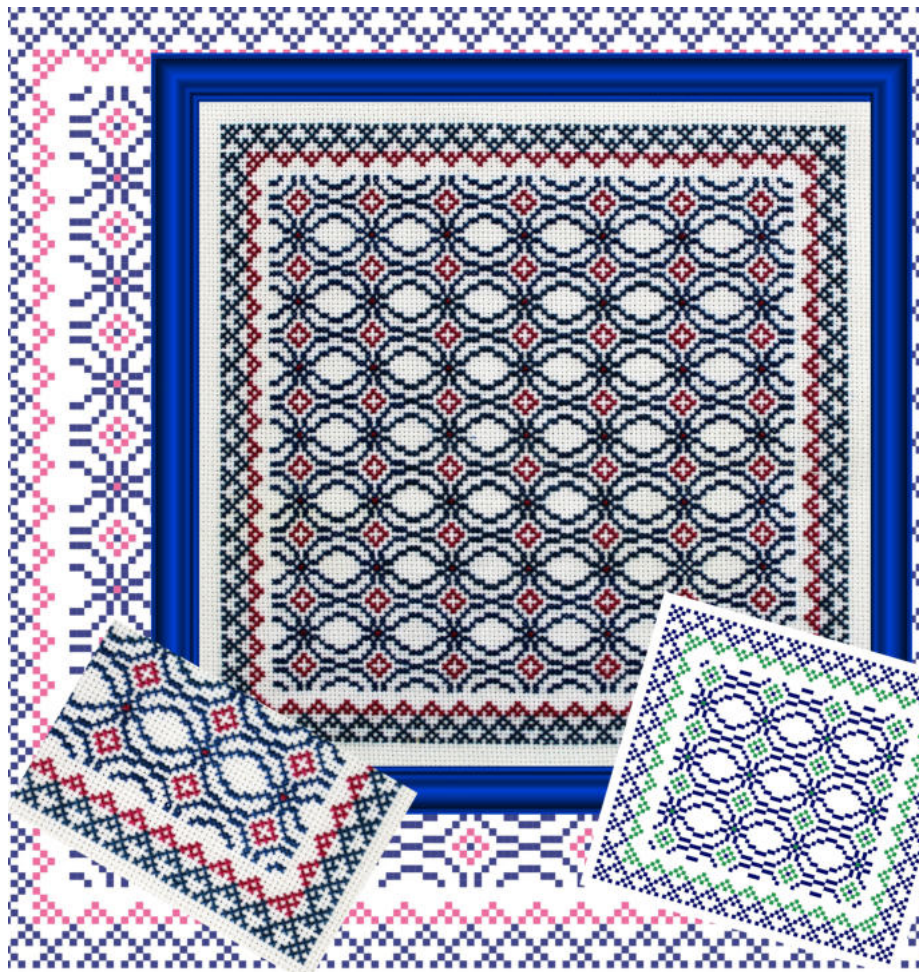
New chart for January 2026 CS0014 Seigaiha Variation

This is the third chart in the series of Japanese style cross stitch designs.

Repeating a pattern with slow, careful stitching is restful yet produces a satisfying result.

It can be worked in one colour or two. The colours can be changed to suit the individual but avoid pale colours as they can be difficult to see.

Choose an antique white rather than a bright white fabric to avoid the glare. Sit comfortably under a good light and stitch!



Design Area: 9.36 x 9.36 inches.

Stitches: 131 x 131

Fabric: Zweigart 14 count

Aida. 14 x 14 inches.

Mini Sampler

Design Area: 5.50 x 5.07 inches.

Stitches: 77 x 71

Fabric: Zweigart 14 count Aida.
8 x 8 inches

‘Stitch Along’ 2025
Designs by Elizabeth Almond, Blackwork Journey
Block 12 - Making up the embroidery



I hope you have enjoyed your stitching adventure!

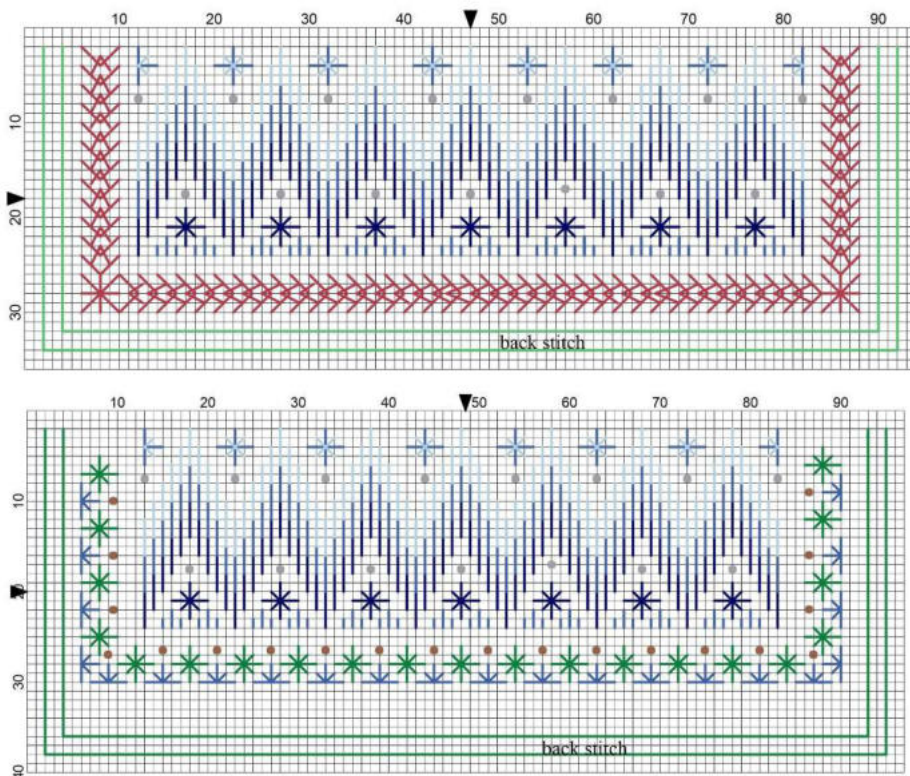
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Block 12 Stitch Along 2025 Making up the samplers.

There are a few different ways in which the samplers can be completed:

1. Framing. If the embroidery is to be framed it is not necessary to work the back stitch bands. Remove all the tacking threads. Place the embroidery face down on a soft towel, Steam press lightly and pull into shape. Do not trim the edges but leave for mounting.

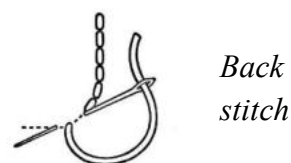
Wall hanging - Preparation:



Add two rows of back stitch to the sides and bottom using two strands of floss.

Work two rows of back stitch round the embroidery two blocks away from the wheatear and two and six blocks away from the Smyrna cross border in a white or pastel thread. (See Diagram 1). Use 2 strands of floss or Cotton P rle No.12. Pull gently!

This band will be used if the embroidery is to be made into a wall hanging on **both** samplers.



*Back
stitch*

Diagram 1

Decorative hangers can be purchased from the internet or alternatively, concealed and detached channels can be used as shown in Diagram 2.



Check the back carefully for loose ends!



Add the lining: Turn the raw edge over two blocks away from the back stitch border and tack.



Turned over and tacked in position ready for the lining to be added.

Lay the embroidery on the backing fabric and trim the fabric approx. 0.5 inches all the way round. Turn the raw edges in and slip stitch into position using matching thread.



Decide how much turn-over will be required for the pole sleeve and fold over. This will depend on the type of hanger used.

Allow sufficient overlap for the pole to pass through easily. A flat piece of wood can be stitched inside the concealed channel and a cord hanger attached.

Net rods can be cut to size. Wooden dowelling can also be used.

Do not stitch the concealed channel down until the backing has been

stitched. Once the pole has been inserted add the cord for hanging.

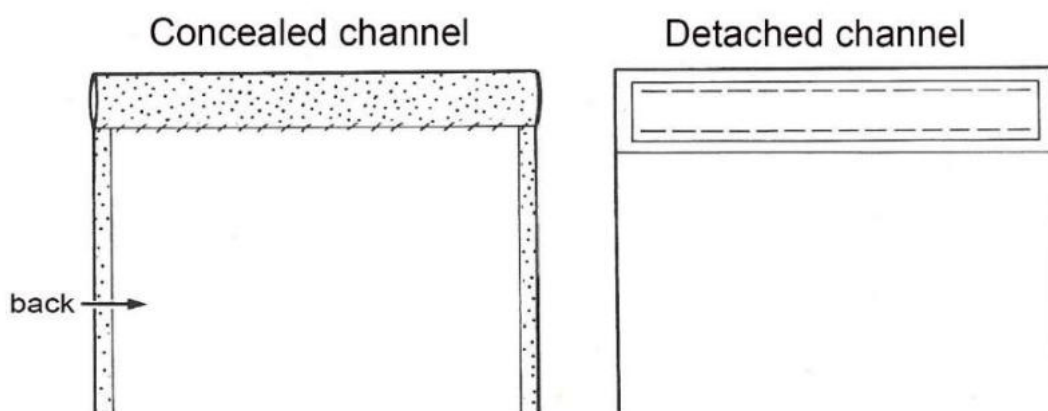


Diagram 2

Adding a detached channel:

Cut a piece of lining fabric 3 inches wide x the width of the sampler.

Turn the short ends in and hem.

Fold in half lengthways and stitch the two long sides together. Finger press or iron the fold open. Place in position on the lining and slip stitch into place.

Place the finished piece face down a soft towel and press lightly.

Patchwork Table Runner.

Medium weight cotton fabric required for patchwork border and backing. Tacking thread. Thin wadding (optional).



Patchwork border.

Adding the borders: Cut four strips 4 inches wide – two the length of the sampler, two short ones – the width of the sampler plus 8 inches. Tack the long strips into position and machine stitch or hand stitch allowing a 0.5-inch seam allowance. Press each fold open before adding the next strip. Traditionally in patchwork this would be pressed over to one side, in this case away from the aida to reduce the fabric shadowing through the aida. Tack the short top and bottom strips into position, machine stitch and press open.

Tack the wadding if required into position at this stage.

Adding the back: Place the backing fabric and top together, wrong sides facing outwards. Stitch all three sides and the bottom corners leaving an opening in the bottom middle to turn the work inside out. Trim the corner seams diagonally and turn the embroidery right sides out. Finger press the edges. Turn the raw edges of the bottom opening inwards and slip stitch closed. Place the runner face down on a soft towel and press lightly.

An alternate finish for quilters: Layer it with the wadding and backing. Then use a continuous double binding strip around the edge with folded mitred corners, attached by machine on the front. Fold the raw edge over and slip stitch by hand at the back.

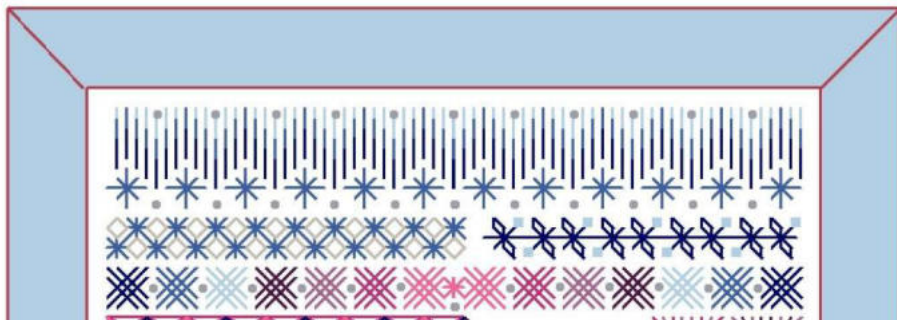
Place the finished runner face down on a soft towel and press lightly.



Strip borders can also be added to enlarge the hanger embroidery.

Corners can be mitred on the strip borders:

Prepare and position the strips: Align two fabric strips right sides together, forming an "L" shape where the corner will be. The edges you want to mitre should be aligned at a 45-degree angle.



Mark the Corner: From the corner point, measure in 0.5 inches along both edges and make a mark. Draw a diagonal line connecting these two marks to form a small triangle.

Stitch the Diagonal: Machine or hand stitch directly on the marked diagonal line, starting at one mark and ending at the other, using a backstitch at the beginning and end for security.

Trim & Press: Trim the excess fabric from the corner triangle, leaving about 0.25 inch (or the seam allowance) from the stitching line.

I hope you have enjoyed your journey through stitching as much as I have enjoyed working with you. I look forward to seeing your finished work posted on the Facebook groups for everyone to admire.

If you have any queries, please contact:

lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching,

Liz

References:

RSN Stitch Bank is a free resource designed to preserve the art of hand embroidery through digitally conserving and showcasing the wide variety of the world's embroidery stitches and the ways in which they have been used in different cultures and times. Now containing over 500 stitches, each stitch entry contains information about its history, use and structure as well as a step-by-step method with photographs, illustrations and video.

<https://rsnstitchbank.org>

Mary Corbet's Needle 'n Thread

Stitch videos, stitch instructions and designs.

<https://marycorbetneedlenthread.com>

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